

2009 ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON RECAP

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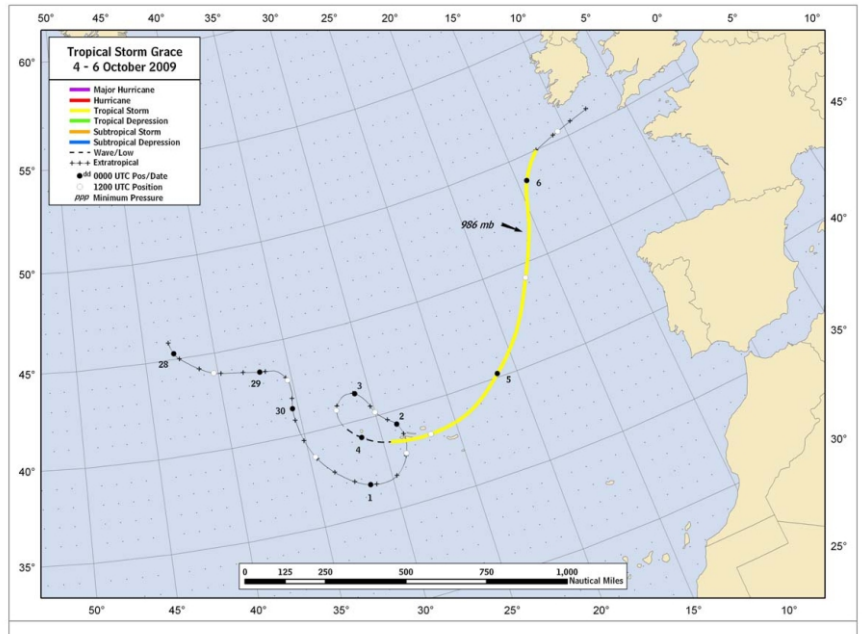
The 2009 Atlantic hurricane season, which comes to a close on November 30, turned out to be quite an interesting season. Thankfully, no hurricanes made landfall along the coast of the United States for the first time since 2006. In addition, the season ended up with less named storms than the climatological average with a total of nine, only three of which would become hurricanes. This was mostly attributable to a moderate El Niño that formed. El Niño helps limit Atlantic hurricane activity as warmer than normal waters in the Pacific basin lead to stronger upper-level westerly winds over the Caribbean Sea and tropical Atlantic Ocean. With that said, the season will still be a memorable one as it produced many notable events and firsts in recorded history.

The 2009 season started off very slowly. The first named storm of the season was Tropical Storm Ana which did not form until August 12. That was the latest for the first named storm of a season since 1992 when Hurricane Andrew formed on August 17 that year. Ana dissipated over the central Atlantic Ocean before coming in contact with any land masses.

The first hurricane of the season formed on August 17 when Tropical Storm Bill was upgraded to a hurricane in the eastern Atlantic Ocean. Bill also became the first of two major hurricanes (Category 3 storm with winds of 115 miles per hour or higher) in the 2009 hurricane season. It would eventually make landfall in Newfoundland as a weakening tropical storm. The other major hurricane of the 2009 season was Hurricane Fred which formed on September 7. Fred became a category two hurricane only six hours after being upgraded to a hurricane and became only the third major hurricane to form east of 35 degrees west longitude. Fred would begin to weaken soon thereafter and dissipated south of Bermuda.

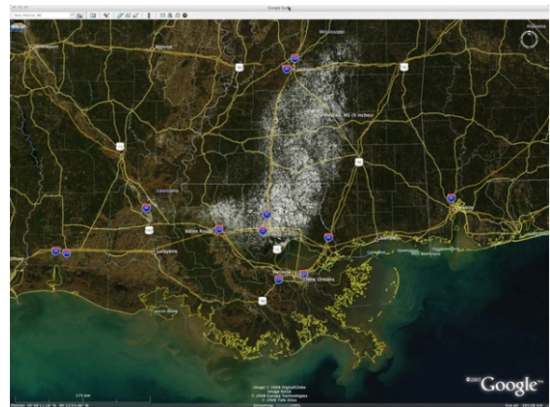
Another interesting storm during the season was Tropical Storm Grace. Grace formed just northeast of the Azores on October 4. The area it formed in was the furthest north and east in the basin on record, breaking a record set in 2005 by Vince. Grace was eventually absorbed by a frontal system, when it was located less than 100 miles from the coast of Ireland.

Only two systems made landfall along the coastline of the United States. One was Tropical Storm Claudette, which made landfall on the eastern end of Santa Rosa Island in Florida on August 17. The other was Tropical Storm Ida which made landfall near Dauphin Island along Mobile Bay in Alabama on November 10. Ida's landfall was the farthest west for any tropical system developing that late in the season. While the season was considered a quiet one, Tropical Storm Ida still affected our area and caused Tropical Storm warnings to be issued along our coastline. While only a few areas experienced tropical storm force winds it was still an important reminder that even in a "quiet" season our area can experience problems from coastal flooding, strong winds and rain.



A Look Back at the 2008 Snow Fall Event

An unusually-early snowfall event occurred in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi on December 11th, 2008. A strong upper level disturbance surged southward across the continental U.S. towards the gulf coast. As this feature reached the Gulf of Mexico and proceeded eastward, plentiful moisture wrapped around the backside of the upper level low. Meanwhile, a deep layer of arctic air moved into the area. This combination of cold temperatures, ample moisture and atmospheric lift from the upper level low resulted in



widespread snowfall across much of the LIX forecast area. Snowfall was widespread across the area beginning in the Baton Rouge and McComb area prior to daybreak and then spreading rapidly east into the New Orleans area by 9 am. Although locations as far south as New Orleans received measurable snow, the greatest accumulations occurred mainly along and north of Interstate 12. Some locations received as much as 8 inches of snow.





Christmas Weather Facts

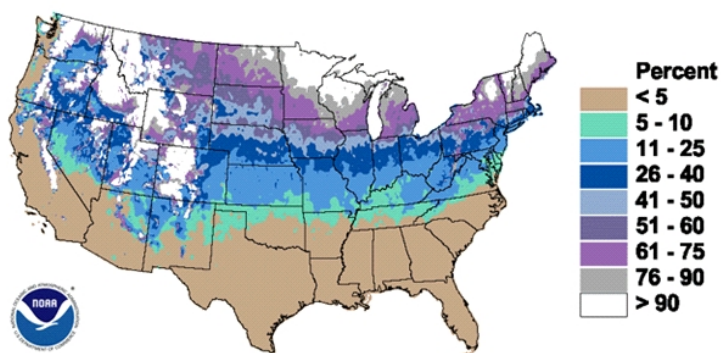


The arrival of the Christmas season always beckons the question 'Will this one be a white Christmas?' In the Deep South such aspirations can be a tall order. In 2004, however, the rare "White Christmas" did occur in the New Orleans metropolitan area when a general dusting of about 0.5 to 1 inch of snow was mixed with sleet at times to give the day a special feeling. Children in Chalmette erected snowmen in their yards that morning only to see them vanish later in the day. The NOAA National Climatic Data Center indicates there is less than a 5 percent chance of experiencing a White Christmas in any given year across the Gulf States.

How often has the Gulf South come close to having a White Christmas? In 1953, a light dusting of snow fell on Christmas at the New Orleans International Airport. Other close dates not quite on Christmas include 4.5 inches that fell on New Year's Eve 1963, 0.5 inches on December 22, 1989 and a trace in 1995. Back in 1878, a trace was reported on December 26th.

The coldest Christmas, by far, was the record Arctic cold event of 1983, when temperatures fell into the lower teens and upper single digits across the Deep South. New Orleans recorded a low of 14F while McComb, MS dropped to 9F. Baton Rouge and Gulfport dropped as low as 11F that Christmas morning. Below is a table of Christmas Day climatology for various locations around the area.

Probability of a White Christmas



Location (since year)	New Orleans (1948)	Baton Rouge (1893)	McComb (1948)	Gulfport (1956)	Slidell (1956)	Houma (1893)
Normal High	63	61	60	61	62	64
Normal Low	44	41	39	44	41	44
Record High Year	79 2008	85 1903	78 1955	75 1964	80 1964	82 1922
Record Low Year	14 1983	11 1983	9 1983	11 1983	12 1983	13 1983
Wettest/Year	4.01"/1973	2.95"/1943	1.74"/1973	1.50"/1976	1.21"/1969	3.67"/1938
Snow/Year	0.50"/2004	0.00/NA	0.00/NA	0.00/NA	0.00/NA	1" on ground 1989
Closest snow Day/year		3" 12/11/2008	0.8" 12/22/1993	1" 12/18/1996	Trace 12/11/2008	3" 12/23/1989

